



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Observes Poison Prevention Week
State Health Department Urges North Dakotans To Take Measures
To Avoid Unintentional Poisonings

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of National Poison Prevention Week March 15 through 21, 2009, the North Dakota Department of Health is encouraging North Dakotans to take measures to avoid unintentional poisonings, according to Diana Read, Injury/Violence Prevention Program director for the Department of Health.

Each year, more than 2 million poisonings are reported to the 61 Poison Centers across the United States. According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers, about 90 percent of poisonings happen at home, and more than 50 percent of poisonings involve children younger than 6. The majority of fatal poisonings occur among adults, especially older adults.

Calls from North Dakotans to the national poison control phone number are answered by Hennepin Regional Poison Control Center in Minneapolis, Minn. In 2008, North Dakotans called the center 12,021 times. Forty-two percent of the calls were for poison that was swallowed, inhaled, or exposed to the skin or the eyes. The rest of the calls were for information/education. The majority of the exposure calls came from individuals in a residence, and almost 70 percent of calls involved children younger than 5.

“Most poisonings are preventable,” Read said. “It’s so very important that all adults take preventive measures to protect children and themselves from unintentional poisonings.”

The Department of Health recommends the following poison-prevention measures:

- Keep all medicines, household chemicals and other poisonous substances away from children and away from food. Never leave them on the bedside stand, kitchen table or bathroom counter. Lock them up if possible.

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

- Warn children never to put medicines, chemicals, plants or berries in their mouths unless an adult says it's OK. At an early age, teach children that some pretty things, like vitamins and aspirin, can hurt them. Never call medicine "candy" to get a child to take it.
- Never store poison in food or beverage containers.
- Read all labels. Follow the instructions and measure carefully. Open and take medicines only when the lights are on.
- Put all unused medications in a sturdy, securely sealed container and then in the trash can where children and pets can't reach them.
- Do not carry medicine in your purse or diaper bags because children like to play with them.
- Do not put decorative lamps and candles that contain lamp oil where children can reach them because lamp oil is very toxic.
- Protect skin and eyes with goggles and gloves when using insect killers, solvents, garden spray, etc.
- Keep windows and/or doors open or run fans when using strong cleaning products. Never mix cleaning products together.
- Have the national poison control phone number with other emergency contacts. Telephone stickers and magnets with the phone number are available from the North Dakota Department of Health

In case of a poisoning or a questionable episode, people should do the following:

- Do not give the person anything to eat or drink. Call the Poison Control Center at 800.222.1222 immediately.
- Bring the product or bottle to the phone so you can read the label to the staff at the Poison Control Center. Explain what was taken, how much was taken, when it was taken, and the age and weight of the person.
- Do not give syrup of ipecac or activated charcoal unless told to do so by the Poison Control Center or your physician.

Since 1961, the third week in March has been designated as National Poison Prevention Week. This annual observance focuses on the dangers of poisonings and how to prevent them. The North Dakota Department of Health works to help prevent unintentional poisonings by providing education, a public website and informational materials, as well as supporting access to the Poison Control Center helpline.

For more information about poison prevention or to request stickers and magnets with the national poison control number, contact Diana Read, North Dakota Department of Health, at 800.472.2286 (press 1) or visit our website at www.ndpoison.org.

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